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A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE
METHODIST CHAPEL,

At HULL,

On WEDNESDAY, the 7th of MARCH, 1798,
Being the DAY appointed for a
NATIONAL FAST.

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By JOSEPH BENSON.  
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Printed for G. WHITFIELD, City-Road, and sold at the
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1798.

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S. R. M. O. N.

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BY JOSEPH T. HENSON

1870

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A SERMON, &c.

ISAIAH V. 4.

What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

I. **T**HE highly illuminated and divinely inspired author of this book, who has obtained the name of the evangelical Prophet, because he was commissioned to announce to mankind, in a clearer and fuller manner than any of the other ancient Prophets, the coming of the Messiah and the blessings of his kingdom, was also raised up and endowed with the Spirit of Prophecy for another and much less pleasing purpose. He was sent to *shew* God's ancient people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins, and to warn them of the tremendous judgments that hung over their heads; and were just ready to fall upon them. This task, painful as it was, he as faithfully executed, as the more agreeable commission of publishing mercy and salvation through a Redeemer. And as he spared no pains, so he left no means untried to do it effectually. He instructed, he reproved, he exhorted, he commanded, he proclaimed promises, and denounced threatenings, in the name of the Lord. Often he spoke in plain terms, sometimes in figurative language. Often he addressed them in prose, sometimes, as here, in poetry. It is true the Prophecy, in whatever way some parts of it might be delivered to the people, was evidently written and has been handed down to us in Hebrew verse. But here we have a kind of abstract of the whole of it, as far as it concerns the conduct of God towards

the Jewish church and nation, in a short Poem, inscribed to the Prophet's WELL-BELOVED, that is, to the MESSIAH, the ancient King of Israel. "GOD the Father, (says a well-known Commentator) dictates this Poem to the honour of Christ, his well-beloved Son, whom he hath constituted Lord of the Vineyard. The Prophet sings it to the honour of Christ too, for he is his *well-beloved*, the Old Testament Prophets being friends of the Bridegroom.

2. There is a near resemblance between this Song and that of Moses, of which this may be considered as an exposition. For, what Moses, in his song, foretold respecting the degeneracy and punishment of the posterity of Jacob, Isaiah, in this, represents as being now upon the point of being fulfilled. And as Moses wrote his predictions in verse that they might be more affecting to, as well as more easily learned and more exactly remembered by the Israelites, who were commanded to commit them to memory, and teach them to their children (Deut. xxxi. 19, 22, and the xxxii. 46,) so, for similar reasons does the Prophet deliver in verse, this declaration of the accomplishment of these predictions, as also in order that all nations and ages might be duly impressed with an awful sense of the wisdom and power and justice of that GOD, to whose all-seeing eye all events, *from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things*, are manifest, and under whose direction they all are. I would only remark further here, that as this allegorical and mournful Poem was to receive a second and more perfect fulfilment, soon after the crucifixion of the Son of GOD, so Christ manifestly referred to it in his Parable of the Vineyard, (Matt. xxi. 33) and, as Jerom has observed, did in effect, sing it, when he *beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes! For the*

the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

3. But let us attend to the obvious sense and primary application of this divine song. Verse 1, *Now will I sing*, that is, I will put into verse, and record, as Moses did his song, *to my well-beloved*, to the Lord of the Vineyard, whom I love, and for whose honour I am much concerned, *a song of my beloved*, not dictated by my fancy or resentment, but inspired by his Spirit, *touching his Vineyard*. This *Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts*, as we learn, verse 7, was the *House of Israel*; viz. the Jewish Church and Nation. God had called them from Ur, of the Chaldees, an idolatrous country, and had redeemed them from Egyptian bondage, and set them apart for himself, as a peculiar people, just as a man purchases, or rescues from the barren wilderness, ground for a Vineyard. He had separated them from other nations by an hedge of peculiar Laws and Institutions; so that *the people dwelt alone, and was not reckoned among the nations*, (Num. xxiii. 9.) He had acknowledged, loved, and particularly regarded them as his. Or, in the beautiful and expressive language of Moses, *when he divided the nations their inheritance, when he separated the Sons of Adam, he set bounds to the people according to the number of the children of Israel*. Him, (Israel) he found in a desert land, in the waste and howling wilderness. He led him about, he instructed him; he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an Eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him: and there was no strange god with him.

4. The Prophet proceeds, *My beloved hath a Vineyard in a very fruitful hill*; or, as it is literally,

according to the Hebrew, *In an horn, the son of oil.* He manifestly alludes to the hilly nature of Judea, the abundance of oil and other products of it, and the numerous herds of horned cattle, and flocks of sheep and goats which grazed on its mountains and in its valleys. This also is well described in Moses's sublime and poetical language. *He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock: butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat, and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape: The fountain of Jacob was upon a land of corn and wine, also his heavens did drop down dew.* Altho' the land was naturally barren, yet while the Lord gave it the former and latter rain regularly, and blessed it, it was very fruitful. But the meaning is, that, thro' their situation and the goodness of God to them, they had every advantage for bearing fruit to his glory. *He fenced it.* They were under his peculiar protection. *He rode, as Moses expresses it, (Deut. xxxiii. 26) upon the heavens in their help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal GOD was their refuge, and underneath were the everlasting arms; so that Israel dwelt in safety, altho' alone, being saved of the Lord, who was the shield of his help, and the sword of his excellency.* What was foretold of one tribe was applicable to them all, while they were obedient, *The beloved of the Lord dwelt in safety by him: Jehovah covered him all day long, and he dwelt between his shoulders (Deut. xxxiii. 12.)* And he gathered out the stones thereof, removed the grand hindrances of fruitfulness, viz. ignorance and error, idolatry and superstition, with the society of other nations, with whom they were forbid to intermarry, or hold communion, lest these things should be introduced again among them. *He planted it with the choicest Vine, his Law, or revealed Will, the truths, precepts and promises of which,*

which, being grafted in their hearts, would have made them fruitful to his praise. He *built a Tower in the midst of it*. In Vineyards Towers were often built for ornament and for defence against violence, for the accommodation of the Vine-dressers, and for places of residence for the Lord of the Vineyard. This seems to be mentioned with an allusion to the Temple, where God dwelt among them, where the *Priests, Prophets and People* assembled, and where they enjoyed the means of edification, comfort and safety, and which was a peculiar ornament to the Country. And he *digged a Wine-press therein*. This is probably to be understood of the Altar, to which the Sacrifices, as fruits of the Vineyard, were brought.

5. The Prophet having thus, in the name of Jehovah, enumerated the blessings he had conferred upon his Vineyard, proceeds next to speak of the returns the Vineyard had made. *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge I pray you, for being inlightened by my oracles of eternal truth you are best able to judge, betwixt me and my Vineyard. What could have been done more to my Vineyard that I have not done in it?* As nothing more could be done to a Vineyard, to render it fruitful, than the things above mentioned; so nothing more could have been done, consistently with the divine perfections and God's eternal counsels, to render his Israel wife, holy and happy, than had been done. *Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, not the mere leaves, observe, of an external profession, nor the mere buds and blossoms of good purposes and good beginnings, but grapes, the solid fruits of righteousness, "vineyard fruit, (says one) as they enjoyed vineyard privileges;" fruit in its nature suitable to the vine wherewith it was planted, and in an abundance, suited to the fatness of the soil and the labour and culture bestowed upon it.—Wherefore brought it forth wild grapes? or, as Bishop Lowth renders it,*
poisonous

poisonous berries ; not only no fruit, but worse than none ? Their grapes, as Moses expresses it a thousand years before, (Deut. xxxii. 33) were grapes of Gall, their Clusters were bitter ; their wine was the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps. They brought forth hypocritical performances in religion ; counterfeited graces and virtues, which seem first here to be meant by wild grapes. Of these the Lord speaks by his Prophet (chap. i. 11—15). To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices unto me ? saith the Lord ;—bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto me ; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of Assemblies, I cannot away with ; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting : your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth : they are a trouble unto me ; I am weary to bear them. When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you ; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear. The reason is evident : they were not consistent. They went thro' these and such-like external forms of religion, but in the mean time did not give God their hearts ; nay lived in known and wilful sin. This people draw near to me with their mouth (says he, Isai. xxix. 13) and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me. Therefore, as we read (Isai. lxvi.) He that killed an ox, in sacrifice, was as if he slew a man, he that sacrificed a lamb as if he cut off a dog's neck ; he that offered an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood ; he that burned incense as if he blessed an idol. Amidst all their forms and appearances of piety, they choose their own ways, and their soul delighted in their abominations.

6. But 2dly, by *wild grapes, or poisonous berries*, here, we are to understand the fruits of corrupt nature, from what the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews terms *the root of bitterness*, and Moses (Deut. xxix. 18) *a root that bears gall and wormwood*, viz. the works of the flesh, such as the Apostle has enumerated (Gal. v. 19—21) *Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, hatred, variance,*

riance, emulations, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings. These, and such like fruits, were brought forth in abundance by the Jews, as their whole history evinces. They were guilty of profaneness and immorality, of covetousness, injustice, fraud, violence, oppression (verse 7.)—They joined house to house and lay field to field; they loved gifts and followed after rewards: they judged not the fatherless, neither did the cause of the widow come unto them. They justified the wicked for reward, and took away the righteousness of the righteous from him. Their hands were defiled with blood and their fingers with iniquity: their lips spoke lies, and their tongues muttered perverseness. None, comparatively, called for justice, nor did any plead for truth; they trusted in vanity, conceived mischief, and brought forth iniquity. They hatched cockatrice eggs, and weaved the spider's web. Their feet ran to evil, and they made haste to shed innocent blood: Their thoughts were thoughts of iniquity, wasting and destruction were in their paths: There was no judgment in their goings. They made them crooked paths, and whosoever went therein knew no peace. (Isai. i. 23, and v. 23, and lix. 3—8. In the mean time, they rose up early in the morning, that they might follow strong drink, and continued until night, till wine inflamed them: Yea, they were mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink; and the harp and the viol, and the tabret and pipe, and wine were in their feasts: but they regarded not the work of the Lord, neither considered the operation of his hands, (Isai. v. 11, 22) They lay on beds of ivory, and stretched themselves on their couches, and eat the lambs of the flock, and calves out of the midst of the stall, drank wine in bowls, and anointed themselves with the chief ointments, chaunted to the sound of the viol, and invented to themselves instruments of musick of all kinds, oppressed the poor, crushed the needy, and said to their masters, Bring, and let us drink, (Amos vi. 4. and iv. 1.)

And

7. And as they exceeded all bounds of reason and religion in the gratification of their appetites, in these respects, so also in every other. Like their neighbours, the posterity of the ten tribes, that had revolted under Jeroboam, not only in *swearing and lying, and killing, and stealing, but also in committing Adultery, they brake out, and blood touched blood* (Hos. iv. 1, 2.) According to the testimony of Jeremiah (chap. v. 7) *Being fed to the fall, they assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses, and committed adultery. Yea, they were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife.* And the corruption of manners was so general even in Jerusalem, which had been termed the *Holy City*, that the same Prophet (chap. v. 1) exhorts to *run to and fro thro' the streets, and see and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if a man could be found, if there were any that executed judgment, that sought the truth, and the Lord would pardon it.* If it be asked, what the Prophets and Priests were doing, that they did not remonstrate against and reprove such general and aggravated wickedness; I answer, in the language of Isaiah (chap. lvi. 10) *His watchmen were blind: they were all ignorant: they were all dumb dogs that could not bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they were greedy dogs that could never have enough, and they were shepherds that could not understand: they looked to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, said they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.* To sum up the whole in Jeremiah's words (chap. v. 31) *The Prophets, in general, prophesied falsely, and the Priests bore rule by their means: and the people, who wished to be flattered in their sins, and to have peace preached to them even when there was no peace, loved to have it so.*

8. In consequence of all this, their destruction at last, even the evil day which they did not love

to think of, became inevitable, as was here foretold by the Prophet, and had been predicted by Moses at least a thousand years before. Because *Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked;—because he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation, provoking him to jealousy by strange gods, and by abominations newly come up;—because of the rock that begat him he was unmindful, and forgot the God that formed him; therefore, the Lord hid his face from them, moved them to jealousy by those that were not a people, and provoked them to anger by a foolish, an unenlightened, an atheistical or an idolatrous, nation. He heaped mischiefs upon them, and spent his arrows upon them. He burned them with hunger, and devoured them with bitter destruction. The sword without, and terror within, destroyed both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also, with the man of grey hairs. He scattered them into corners, and would have made the remembrance of them cease from among men, had it not been for his gracious promises to Abraham and his seed (Deut. xxxii. 26.) Or, in the language of Isaiah here, He took away the hedge of his Vineyard, and it was eaten up. They were no longer distinguished as a peculiar people, but were rejected, and became common. They mingled themselves with other nations, and therefore they were scattered among them, and other nations spoiled and preyed upon them. He broke down the wall thereof, and it was trodden down. They were no longer protected, but left exposed. God removed all their defences from them, and they became an easy prey to their enemies, who had long waited for an opportunity to do them a mischief, and now trod them down, and trampled upon them. He laid it waste, so that it no longer retained the face of a Vineyard, their civil and religious polity being destroyed, and, as Micah had foretold, Jerusalem itself, the seat of their government, and centre of their worship, being ploughed*

as a field, (Mic. iii. 12.) *It was no longer pruned or digged.* The Servants of God were removed, and no more pains were taken to render the Vineyard fruitful, which it is well known has been the case with it now upwards of 1700 years, so that nothing but thorns and briars are to be found where fruits of righteousness and flowers of grace once flourished. Nay, in just judgment, he *commanded the clouds to rain no rain upon it.* He denied them his grace and the influences of his Spirit, because they had so long received them in vain. They had for ages been guilty of the *sin* of barrenness, and therefore, for ages, they have been *curfed* with the *curse* of barrenness. This was set forth by our Lord emblematically, in the action of his cursing the barren fig-tree, (related Mark xi. 12) and of this they were warned in the parable of the fig-tree (recorded Luke xiii. 6.) Those that are at all acquainted with the history of the Jews know that all this has been fully accomplished, *first* in the depopulation of Judea, and in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and a *second time* in their *last most terrible* destruction by the Romans.

But what have we to do with all this? How does it concern us?

1. Can we, with any propriety, be termed the Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts? And has the Lord done any thing for us, as his Vineyard.

2. When he looked that we should bring forth *grapes*, have we brought forth *wild grapes*?

3. Have we reason, therefore, to apprehend any such consequences as those that befell the Jews? And if so, can these consequences be prevented?

To answer these questions shall be the subject of the remaining part of this discourse.

And 1st, Can we, with any propriety, be termed the *Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts*? and has the Lord done any thing for us as his Vineyard?

1. In

1. In answer to this, I observe, that if the *house* of *Israel*, or the *Jewish Nation*, was properly termed God's Vineyard, for the reasons above mentioned, we, for similar reasons, may very properly be termed his Vineyard. We have been separated from heathen and idolatrous nations, and taken within the pale of God's visible Church; we have, in general, been dedicated to God in the ceremony of baptism, and had the name of *Christ* named upon us; and we have been acknowledged as his, in many ways, which cannot now be mentioned, have had many tokens of his presence with us, and, in many respects, have been peculiarly loved and regarded. These particulars are either so *manifest* that they need neither *proof* nor *elucidation*, or they will receive all they need in our further prosecution of the subject. I therefore go on to observe, that

2. We are a Vineyard in a *very fruitful soil*. And here I might speak of the temperateness of our climate, the fertility of our soil, our advantages for excelling in all kinds of Manufactures, as well as in *Arts* and *Sciences* and every branch of *Literature*, our admirable situation for Commerce, the great Trade we have had for Centuries to all parts of the earth, and especially to the *new World*, the vast influx of wealth which this has occasioned, and the dignity and power it has given us, not only among the kingdoms of Europe, but throughout the whole globe:—but this would lead me away from my principal design, which is to set before you those privileges and blessings of another kind which have been conferred upon us. I proceed therefore with the Parable, and say

3. He hath *fenced us*, as his Vineyard. And with respect to this, not to mention our *insular situation*, and what is, in a great degree, the consequence thereof, the strength of our *Fleets*, which, under God, have, from time to time, been great instruments of defence to our nation; certainly our peculiarly *mild*, and *excellent* form of Government

has repeatedly proved a mean of protection to us. And here it will occur to the remembrance of those who are acquainted with the history of their Country, how sometimes one branch of the Legislature has saved us, and sometimes another, so that no branch seems to have been given in vain. Not only have we often been indebted, under God, for our preservation, as a free, and independent people, to the House of Commons, but even to the House of Lords, nay and to the power of the Crown. Every part of the Constitution has had its share in the defence of our persons and properties, lives and liberties, and we have evident reason to be thankful to God for every part, as well as for those very wholesome Laws which are as an hedge around us. Add to this, that God, in the course of his adorable providence, has, at sundry times and in divers manners, so evidently interposed for our deliverance and protection, that even the whole nation has acknowledged it, and stated and anniversary days of general thanksgiving have been appointed and kept for many years, in commemoration of these his gracious interpositions in our favour, as well as many occasional seasons of public solemnity instituted from time to time for the same purpose. The destruction of the famous Spanish *Armada*, termed *Invincible*, the timely discovery of the *Gun-powder-Plot*, the seasonable landing of *King William*, the crushing of the Rebellion in 1715 and 1745, to say nothing of many later interferences of Jehovah for our defence or deliverance, are known to every one.

4. *He gathered out the stones thereof.* This particular also is very applicable to us. For surely *stones* are not greater hindrances to the fruitfulness of a field or vineyard, than such *idolatry*, *superstition*, and *ignorance*, as had been spread over our Country, during the dark ages of Popery, were to *wisdom* and *piety*, *holiness* and *happiness*, and all the other fruits of righteousness. Now from all these

we

we were, in a great degree, delivered by the light of Truth, which, it is well known, dawned upon us, by means of Wickliffe, "that harbinger and morning star of the Reformation," as one calls him, among the very first Countries of Europe. Nor have we, as a nation, again experienced a return of these calamities.

5. He has planted his Vineyard also *with the choicest Vine*. Shall I say with the *tree of liberty*? I may say so, and with a tree much preferable to that which the French are planting on the Continent. My brethren, in this we are before-hand with these Infidels. They are only planting the *tree*, such as it is, whereas it has *grown and flourished*, yea, and *borne fruit* here, for six hundred years. Ever since the Magna Charta, or the great Charter of Privileges, was obtained, about the year 1216; nay, ever since the trial by Jury was introduced by Alfred, or rather revived by him, about the year 890, we have possessed a degree of liberty, which few nations can boast. No man can be deprived of his *life, liberty, or property*, unless in the judgment of a Jury of his *peers or equals*, he has forfeited the blessing, by some illegal act. To use the words of a well-known writer, "There neither is, nor ever was, any Constitution provided with so many fences as that of England, for the security of personal liberty.—The rights of individuals are so attentively considered, that the Subject may, without the least danger, sue his *Sovereign*, or those who act in his name and under his authority: he may do this in *open court*, where the King may be cast, and be obliged to pay damages to his Subject.—The King, indeed, has a right to *pardon*, but neither he nor the Judges, to whom he delegates his authority, can *condemn* a man, as a Criminal, except he be first found guilty by twelve men, who must be his *peers or equals*. That the Judges may not be influenced by the *King*, or his *Ministers*, to misrepresent the Case to the Jury, they have

their salaries for *life*, and not during the King's pleasure. Nay, if a man be charged with a capital offence, he must not undergo the ignominy of being tried for his life, 'till the evidences of his guilt have been laid before the grand Jury of the *Town* or *County*, in which the fact is alledged to have been committed, and, at least, twelve of them have agreed to a Bill of indictment against him. If they do this, he is to stand a second trial before twelve other men, whose opinion is definitive. If he be an *Alien born*, according to the 28th of Edward III. the Jury must be one half *Aliens* and the other half Denizens, if required; a privilege enjoyed by strangers in no other Country in the world. To enable him to make his defence, he is allowed, in some cases, a copy of his indictment, and furnished with a list of the Jury, who are his true and proper Judges, that he may learn their characters and discover whether they want abilities, or whether they are prejudiced against him. He may, in open court, peremptorily object to 20 of the number, (and in case of treason to 35) and to as many more as he can give reason for their not being admitted, as his Judges, till, at last twelve unexceptionable men, the neighbours of the party accused, or living near the place where the supposed fact was committed, are approved of, who take an oath to judge uprightly, according to the evidence. By challenging the Jury, as it is called, the prisoner prevents all possibility of bribery, or the influence of any superior power, and by their being neighbours to the party accused, or living near the place where the fact was committed, they are supposed to be men who knew the prisoner's course of life, and the credit of the evidence.—And now what has the French nation, with all its boast of liberty, to compare with this most capital privilege of *trial by jury*? Both in France and Holland, the greatest characters, Members of the Councils, have been arrested, and sent into exile, if not secretly cut off, without

without the least form of trial. Judge then who are in possession of the greatest share of true and solid liberty. And as to the security of property, let it be observed, that all *Money-Bills* must originate in the House of Commons, and that no Taxes can be laid upon the people, or money taken from them for any exigence of the state, however great, without the consent of their Representatives.

6. But I must remind you of another kind of liberty, of which you enjoy a larger degree than any Country in Europe; and that is *religious liberty*. Can you not hold and profess what opinions you please, and worship God, *when, where, and how* you think proper? Or even not worship him at all? Does any man dare molest you? And have you not the liberty of the Press, in a greater degree than any other nation? May you not *write, yea, and publish* to the world what you choose, supposing you do not, nay, and too often even if you *do*, injure the character of another?

7. But, valuable as liberty is, and possessed tho' it be in this kingdom, in as great a degree, probably, as is consistent with the well-being of civil Society in this disordered state of man, yet this is not the *choice Vine* to which I refer. The expression, as addressed to Israel, was meant to be understood of God's Law, or of the revelation of his Will, made by Moses and the Prophets; and as addressed to us, or to his professing people in any country, it means his *Word* in general, and the *Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ* in particular. Now, you know, that with *this choice Vine* the Lord has planted his Vineyard. As the Holy Scriptures were introduced into this Country in the early ages of Christianity, so we have had them translated into our own language about the space of 400 years, and thousands of copies of them have been dispersed thro' the Nation, insomuch that very few families have been without them. Add to

this, that, since the time of the Reformation, the Gospel, in its purity, has been preached, more or less, in all parts of the land; and, more especially during the last fifty or sixty years, it has been declared so *clearly*, so *fully*, so *frequently*, and so *universally*, that those who remain either ignorant of it or disobedient to it, are without excuse.

8. Further: Did he build a *Tower* in the midst of his ancient Vineyard? Did he cause a *Temple* to be erected for his worship and service, where he manifested his presence, where his people assembled, where his Word was read, and his Ordinances were administered, and where a provision was made for the accommodation and support of those that ministered in holy things? Just so, by a variety of Churches and Chapels, and the endowments, and incomes annexed to them, he has made ample provision for the instruction of the people with us, for his worship and service, and for the support and maintenance of those that are set apart to the sacred office of preaching his blessed Word, and of administering his holy Ordinances.

9. He digged a Winepress in his Vineyard of old, he prepared, as has been observed, an *Altar*, to which Sacrifices, as fruits of the Vineyard, were brought, and where the expiation of sin, and reconciliation with God, were emblematically set forth, for the encouragement of the most guilty sinners to turn to him, that they might find mercy. And has he not given us the *substance*, of which the Jewish Altar was but a shadow? Has he not furnished the Christian Church with an *Altar*, of which *they have no right to eat that serve the ancient Tabernacle*, (Heb. xiii. 10) even the true Altar that sanctifieth every gift that is offered upon it? I mean the Mediation of the Son of God, and his atoning Sacrifice, offered up for us upon the Cross? Surely he has. And as this is most clearly and fully revealed in the Holy Scriptures, so it has been displayed and preached in a most ample manner, and

and for a long period of time, to this nation, and has also been exhibited continually, in Town and Country, in the solemn Ordinance of the Lord's Supper. And certainly hereby, every possible encouragement is given to the most abandoned sinners, to repent of their sins, and return to God.

10. And has not *this* Vineyard, as well as that of the Jews, been pruned and digged? Surely the Servants of God, some in the national Church, and others of other denominations, have bestowed immense labour and pains upon it. Never since the world began, perhaps, were greater efforts used in the way of preaching and writing, doctrine and exhortation, to reform a nation. And certainly, the exercise of a proper discipline has not been altogether wanting. It has been attended to in many christian Communities: and God has not withheld seasonable and needful chastisement, whether of a private or public nature, individuals, families and churches, as well as the nation, at large, having been repeatedly, and severely, altho', at the same time, graciously and mercifully scourged and corrected. And, to crown the whole, *the Clouds have been commanded to rain rain upon this Vineyard.* God has poured out *his Spirit*, time after time, in a wonderful manner, upon many parts of our nation, especially during the last half Century, and hereby has raised up thousands and tens of thousands of living Witnesses for himself. These all have borne and do still bear testimony to his truth. They *instruct, reprove, exhort*, in word and deed, and, in various ways, *let their light shine before men, that others, seeing their good works, may imitate the same, and hereby glorify their heavenly Father.* What, then, could God have done for his Vineyard, that he hath not done for it? Wherefore, then, when he looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?—But

11. Is this a fact? Have we really brought forth wild grapes? To resolve this question is our next point,

point, and, in order thereto, it will be necessary to refer again to the particulars mentioned under the former head. And

1. Has God made us his *Vineyard*? Have we been dedicated to him in baptism, and has he hereby separated us from idolatrous and heathen nations, and taken us within the Pale of his visible Church? Surely then, there was reason to expect that we should not *think* and *act* like the unenlightened Heathen, but should distinguish ourselves from them in *principle* and *practice*. Where there was a *Vineyard* it was reasonable to look for the *proper* and *peculiar* fruit of a *Vineyard*. For instance, as we professed to acknowledge and receive Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah, it was to be expected that we should bring forth the fruit of a *sincere* and *genuine faith in him*, and in the important *truths* of his everlasting Gospel, which he had sealed by his blood, and confirmed by his resurrection from the dead. And as by his death and resurrection he had laid a most firm foundation for an *hope of immortality*, this, also, might reasonably have been looked for, together with *love* to him, who had given so wonderful a display of his love to us, and had manifested himself to us as the perfection of beauty and source of goodness. And having shewn, in giving his Son for our redemption, how dear we all are to him, and having afforded us ample proof how nearly related we are to one another, as being all made of one blood, and jointly partaking of one mortal and immortal nature, he had reason to expect that we should love *one another with pure hearts fervently*, and that, in imitation of him, who *causes his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust*, and by whose grace *Christ has tasted death for every man*, our hearts should be so enlarged in love to all men, as to *work no ill to any one*, but as we had ability and opportunity to do good to all, *even to the evil and unthankful*. And, after the evidence

dence he had given us that his Will is as good, as it is acceptable and perfect, and that his Law is holy, and his commandments holy, just and good, and that in keeping of them there is great reward, in time and in eternity, it was reasonable he should look for a conformity to his Will, on our part : that his commandments should not be grievous unto us, but that we should love his Law, and that our pleasure should be in it all the day long, while we were never weary of well doing, but steadfast, immovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing, that in due season, we should reap, if we fainted not, and that our labour should not be in vain in the Lord.

2. Now, have we brought forth this fruit? Alas! my brethren, instead of a steady and uniform obedience to God's commands, we have, in general, been guilty of the most open and flagrant violation of them, and that in instances which neither produced profit nor pleasure, as if we had been resolved to sin, for the sake of sinning. May I not instance in *profane swearing*? Is not this a vice which two thirds, perhaps, I may say nine tenths of our nation are more or less guilty of day by day? And is either *advantage* or *pleasure* reaped from it? In this point we far exceed the heathen nations. *False* altho' their gods were, and either *non-entities* or the *workmanship* of their own hands, yet they treated them with more respect than we treat the only living and true God. And what shall I say of *false-swearing*? Is not this a point too in which we exceed them? As there never was a nation, perhaps, in which Oaths were so multiplied as among us, so there never was a nation, probably, in which they were made so light of. But what an affront to the all-seeing God, the Holy One of Israel, the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth, to call upon him to bear witness to what we know to be a lie!

3. Instead of *love to all mankind*, another fruit which we ought to have brought forth, restraining

us from injuring any child of man, and inducing us, as we had opportunity and ability, to do good to all, even to our *enemies*; behold, we have intentionally and wilfully done evil to those that never offended, nay, nor could offend us, being removed to an immense distance, and separated from us by the waters of the intervening Ocean, which they had neither the will nor the power to pass over. It will easily be supposed that I allude to that horrible traffic in human flesh, termed the *Slave-trade*, carried on to so great an extent by the nations of Europe, that some years ago it was computed that “not less than an hundred thousand persons, men, women and children, were brought off the Coast by the European vessels, while an equal number lost their lives, annually, by the wars and other calamities, occasioned by the traffic, either on the shore, without reaching the ship, or on ship-board before they reached the place of sale. It was also computed that more than *one-half*, perhaps *three-fifths* of the trade, was in the hands of the English.” (See a Sermon by the Rev. Mr. Newton, preached on the last thanksgiving-day.)—No one can wonder that a Vote of the House of Commons should pronounce this trade *infamous*; it is only surprizing that such a vote did not pass sooner, and that having passed, it should be in effect rescinded; or that the other branches of the Legislature should hesitate to abolish a trade, which is acknowledged to be infamous! For, as the pious Clergyman, just quoted, justly observes, “While we are delaying, from year to year, to put a stop to our part of it, the blood of many thousands of our helpless, much injured fellow creatures, with the heavy groans of many thousands more, torn from their nearest relatives, connexions and native land, is crying against us” for vengeance, a vengeance which no human counsels or efforts can prevent from falling upon us, while such national injustice, oppression and cruelty, is suffered to proceed unreformed.

reformed. In this point also, christians altho' we are called, we exceed in wickedness all the heathen nations that ever existed upon the earth ; none of which did ever carry on a similar traffic to any such extent. They did indeed buy and sell the captives taken in war, and those born in slavery, but they never resorted, in fleets of ships, to the Coast of a Continent or Island, with a view to purchase or seize, by force or fraud, the bodies of their fellow creatures, and drag them into slavery to remote Countries and distant Climes. Methinks the bare thought of this unprecedented and unparalleled iniquity, committed by persons professing to be the disciples of Christ, is enough to chill one's blood, and fill one's soul with horror. Nor do I see what can prevent the persons concerned in it from trembling under an apprehension of the execution of divine vengeance upon them, but either want of reflection, or a persuasion that all things are left to chance, and that there is no *God that judgeth the earth*. I shall only add here, that as the subject has been taken up of late years and fully investigated, and all the enormities of the infernal traffic brought to light, and repeatedly set in a clear point of view, our continuance in this diabolical, public robbery and murder, has a degree of guilt in it, it had not in former years, and a guilt which no regulations that are or can be made, can any more *palliate* or *excuse*, than laws or rules to regulate the time or manner of committing theft or murder, can remove or lessen the guilt of these enormous crimes.

4. And, after having called your attention to such a glaring proof of our injustice, as a nation, and of consequence want of love to our fellow-creatures, it would be perfectly superfluous to say any thing concerning our want of love to our *Creator*. For it is well known, *If a man say, I love GOD, and hateth, that is, does not love, his brother, his fellow creature, every child of man, he is a liar :*
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for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (1 John iv. 20.) Indeed unless the love of money, and of honour, and of pleasure, that is the love of the world, in exprefs contradiction to St. John, be the love of God, it is too evident that, as a nation, we love him not. And how should we love him, when the only source, from whence the stream of divine love can flow, is not opened in our souls? As a people we have not faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the important truths of his everlasting Gospel. There may indeed be thousands and tens of thousands among us who pay a careless and languid assent to the doctrines of the Gospel in general and the truth of Christianity in particular, if we can be said to assent to what we do not understand: but if *faith without works is dead*; if *no faith availeth but that which worketh by love*, and makes a man a *new Creature*, (Gal. v. 6, and vi. 15) it is evident, by the conduct of the generality of the inhabitants of this land, that the *true, christian, saving* faith, set forth in the Holy Scriptures and in the Articles, Homilies, nay, and in the whole service of our Church, is neither possessed nor sought after by them.

5. Indeed I might go a great deal further here. I might speak of our flat denial of and avowed opposition to some of the leading doctrines of our holy religion, as they are evidently revealed in the sacred Scriptures, such as the *Depravity of human nature*, the *Deity and Atonement of Christ*, *Justification by faith in him*, and *Regeneration by the influence of the Divine Spirit*, together with the *Immortality of the soul*, the *Resurrection of the body*, and a future state of rewards and punishments. The Writings circulated among us of late years, leave us no room to doubt, but that the leaven of Socinianism, very similar to that of ancient Sadduceism, is already diffused extensively in England as well as in Scotland, and that *Infidelity* in all its branches, as *Deism*,
Materialism,

Materialism, nay, and even *Atheism*, is working powerfully, in this Island, as well as upon the Continent. But as I do not address persons of this description, I forbear to enlarge.

6. It appears, then, that altho' we have been dedicated to God in baptism, we have, as a nation, paid but little regard to two branches of our baptismal vow. We have neither "believed all the Articles of the Christian faith," nor "kept God's holy will and commandments." But have we attended to the other branch of that Vow? Have we "renounced the Devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this present world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh?" Alas! my brethren, I fear we have not so much as *attempted* or *professed* to do it. On the contrary, if pride, self-will, discontent, anger, malice, envy, hatred, ambition, contention, strife, animosity, quarrelling, duelling, heresies and schisms in the Church, and seditions against the State;—if these be works of the Devil, his works have been done from one end of the land to the other. And as to the *Pomps* and *Vanities* of this present evil world, I may venture to say, that a fondness for and an eagerness after them, was not carried to a greater extent in any of the ancient heathen Empires, than it is in this Country, at this day. We also equal, if not exceed them, in gratifying most of the sinful lusts of the flesh, particularly gluttony, drunkenness, and lewdness. If fornication was more commonly practised in some of those nations, yet, it seems, *adultery* was not, with other worse than beastly and destructive vices. Accordingly God has chastised these later ages and Christian countries, so called, with a terrible and destructive disorder, termed *the bad disorder*, by way of eminence, the fruit of this horrible abuse of the body, unknown, I think, in former ages and generations.

7. But to turn our eyes from this horrid spectacle of human woe, and leave these adorers of the heathen Venus, in a Christian Country, these Votaries of pleasure, to suffer excruciating pain, to carry

about with them the marks of God's vengeance upon their sin, while *they receive in their own bodies that recompence of their error which is meet*, and waste away and rot above ground ;—let us attend to our abuse of other gifts of our supreme and gracious Benefactor. Notice has been taken of our favourable climate, fertile soil, excellent situation for commerce, our fleets and merchandize, with the wealth that has flowed in upon us from these quarters, our admirable constitution of Government, and the dignity and power this has given us amidst surrounding nations. Now the fruit naturally to be expected from hence was *humility and gratitude*, arising from a conviction that this good land and these great advantages, were not given us for our righteousness ; together with *temperance, frugality, industry, liberality, bounty* to persons in distress, and the use of our power and influence with other nations, in behalf of suffering humanity in all parts of the globe. We ought to have interfered, where we could, to correct abuses, relieve oppressions, rectify wrongs, and lighten the load of human woe in all climes to which our lawful commerce, just claims, necessary defence, or zeal to spread the truth of the everlasting Gospel, and to gain or diffuse the knowledge of improving Sciences or useful Arts, might carry us. But alas ! instead of these pleasant and delicious fruits, so reasonably to be expected and so much to be desired, behold the poisonous berries of pride and ingratitude, luxury and self-indulgence, prodigality and profaneness, dissipation, gambling, and a fondness for all kinds of fashionable amusements ; while our *insular situation*, our *Fleets* and our well-poised form of *Government*, and excellent Laws, which under God, have contributed so much to our protection and safety, have been made the ground of our confidence, and the subjects of our boasting, from day to day. At the same time others, insensible of their obligations to the Government they live under, and of the many blessings they enjoy continually,

nually, have been full of murmurings and complainings against it, and unwearied in their efforts to effect its ruin and destruction. And as to the Laws, reasonable and excellent as they in general are, they have not ceased to be violated either secretly or openly by thousands and myriads, whenever they could persuade themselves that these violations would not be discovered, or would pass unpunished. I might instance in the forgeries, frauds, thefts, robberies, and murders, that are continually perpetrated in town and country, and which no vigilance of the civil Magistrate, and his officers, is able to prevent; not to mention the constant practice of smuggling in Sea-Port Towns, and in divers other parts of the kingdom, to the great injury of the Revenue and of the Community at large. To proceed,

8. Has the Lord *gathered the stones* out of his Vineyard? Has he taken away these grand hindrances of fruitfulness, which rendered this Country barren in former ages? Has he removed the ignorance, superstition, will-worship, and idolatry of the Church of Rome? Surely then, it was reasonable to expect, that being delivered from idle ceremonies, human traditions, and all the empty parade and foppery under which ignorant or designing men had buried the simple and artless religion of Jesus, and bound the Consciences of their Fellow-Creatures, we should attend to and pursue *genuine and vital Christianity*, true godliness and righteousness. But alas! instead of this, we have only made a transition, as strange as it was unexpected, from the extreme of *superstition* to the extreme of *irreligion*. And from the folly and idolatry of worshipping our *Fellow-Creatures*, or even the work of our own hands, and from being *astonished*, as the Prophet speaks, *at the signs of the heathen*, we have gone over to the neglect even of the worship of our *Creator*, the slighting of his wonderful works, and treating with irreverence that great mystery of Godliness, *God manifested in the flesh*, with all the

stupendous miracles performed to convince us of the reality, and awaken our minds to a sense of the importance of it.

9. Further. Has he given us *civil* and *religious liberty*, and that in a degree as great, perhaps, as is possible to be enjoyed in this disordered state of things? The proper and genuine fruit to be looked for from hence was, that we should have made a wise and moderate use of this liberty, *as the Servants of God*. But, instead of this, behold we have brought forth *licentiousness*, in every possible form! While not a few, using their liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, have not ceased to employ their tongues and pens, in favour of new Schemes and equalizing Plans, which would evidently subvert all social order, and introduce anarchy and confusion. Others have multiplied Opinions, modes of worship, parties, and divisions without end. Whence have arisen animosity, strife, contention, variance, hatred, and even ill-will, among the professed followers of the humble, meek, and benevolent Jesus.

10. God, I remarked, has planted his Vineyard with the choicest Vine. He has given us his Word in general, and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in particular. Now surely, considering the vast importance of the matters revealed in it, it might have been reasonably expected, that we should have seriously enquired into the evidence whereby its claim of being a revelation from God is supported; and that, being satisfied on this head, we should have made it the subject of our chief study and delight, from day to day. But, behold! the very reverse is obvious to all! The evidences of the truth of Christianity are not inquired into by one in five hundred; but the generality of our countrymen either carelessly take for granted that the Scriptures are true, on the same principles on which Mahomedans believe the Coran; or, it is presumed, on the slightest examination, or rather on no examination at all, that they are *false*. And even
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with regard to those of a different character, who are at the pains to enquire into the subject, and are fully satisfied as to the authenticity of the divine Oracles, too many of them pay little or no attention to them. They seldom or never peruse them, and therefore do not even understand them, much less do they lay to heart their important contents, so as either to experience or practise the holy and blessed religion they so clearly and forcibly delineate. Nay, it is to be feared, that the bulk of the inhabitants of this Country, whether rich or poor, high or low, young or old, of all ranks and professions, do still reject the Counsel of God against themselves. Now this is so great a crime, and is wont to be so severely punished by him who declares, *This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil*, that I might well stop here, and add no more on the subject of the *wild grapes*, which the Vineyard has brought forth; this one thing, were there nothing else, being sufficient to give us reason to apprehend the most awful consequences. Nevertheless, I shall subjoin a remark or two more, respecting our abuse of some other advantages.

II. As GOD had built a Tower in his Vineyard of old, had furnished his ancient people with a stately Temple; so it has been observed, that he has supplied us with Churches, Chapels, and places of worship, of different kinds, in abundance, and made an ample provision, in Tithes and Offerings, in Curacies, Vicarages, Rectories, Prebendaries, Deaneries, Arch-deaconries, Bishopricks, Arch-Bishopricks, and numberless emoluments, which I cannot name, for the maintenance of those that minister in holy things. Now the fruit to be expected from all this was, that the people should be well instructed in divine things, and the only living and true GOD worshipped, from one end of the land to the other. But alas! while the Churches and Chapels, in many parts of the kingdom, have

stood unfrequented, and God's worship and ordinances have been slighted, we have had to stand astonished at and deplore an abomination of the worst kind, a robbery and sacrilege, unprecedented in ancient times, or among heathen nations. The donations of our Ancestors to the best of causes, and the provision they have *generously* and *piously* made, for the maintenance of divine worship, and the illumination and salvation of the nation, has been and frequently is prostituted to the worst purpose under heaven, to the diffusion of ignorance and vice, of profligacy and dissipation ; that is, to the service of the Devil, and the interests of Hell. It has been, and is it not yet ? frequently consumed in *Play-houses, Assembly-rooms* and *Watering-places*, at *Balls, Masquerades, Horse-races, Gaming-tables*, at *Cards and Dice*, if not also even in houses of ill fame ? And in the day in which the Lord of Hosts did call for weeping and mourning, and girding with sackcloth ; behold, joy and gladness, eating flesh and drinking wine. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. And have we not reason to fear, lest the Lord should pronounce concerning us, as he did concerning the Jews, in similar circumstances of guilt and infatuation : *Surely this iniquity shall not be purged away till ye die, saith Jehovah, God of Hosts ?*

12. But what wonder that we abuse the bounty of man, when we trample under foot the loving-kindness of God ? Did the Lord dig a *Wine-press* in his Vineyard of old ? Did he furnish his ancient Church with an *Altar*, on which Sacrifices of Atonement were offered ? He has provided for us the sacrifice of his Son, and has freely offered us the remission of all our sins, thro' that Sacrifice. And what is the fruit one might justly look for ? Certainly an *humble dependance* on that Sacrifice, for pardon and reconciliation with God, with a *thankful* and *devout remembrance* of his dying love, in a regular attendance on the means appointed for the commemoration of it. But strange to tell ! While the Lord's-Supper is generally most shamefully neglected,

neglected, and myriads of persons in this Christian Country, so called, never attend that solemn Ordinance of God; multitudes, that are more seriously disposed, depend for acceptance on their own works, instead of the atonement made by Christ, while not a few deny that he made any atonement at all; thus *trampling under foot the Son of God, counting the blood of the Covenant a common thing*, the same as the blood of any Martyr, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace.

13. Once more, and I have done with these poisonous and bitter fruits. The Vineyard has been *digged and pruned*, and *the heavens have rained a most gracious rain upon it*. The Servants of God, of various denominations, have taken infinite pains to cultivate the Vineyard, and render it fruitful, while God has, in a most wonderful manner, poured out his Spirit, and wrought an amazing work in the land. Thousands and myriads have been reformed in their lives, nay, and renewed in their hearts. The drunkards have become sober, the lewd chaste, the thieves honest, the profane devout, the proud humble, the passionate meek, the covetous liberal, the prodigal frugal, the idle industrious, the carnal spiritual, and the lovers of the world lovers of God. Instances innumerable of this reformation have appeared in this nation, and are especially to be found in the more populous parts of it, as in the *West of Yorkshire*, and the *East of Lancashire and Cheshire*, in divers parts of *Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire*, in the neighbourhood of *Newcastle upon Tyne and Sunderland*, in *Cornwall*, and in almost all the large Cities and Towns in the kingdom. Now, in what light has this evident and undeniable work of God been considered, by the bulk of the inhabitants of this Country? Has his hand been acknowledged to be in it, and his operation revered and regarded? By no means. This renewal of men's souls after the image of God, and this reformation of their manners, has been represented as *Enthusiasm*, and the

the subjects of this evident change, *Enthusiasts*. Nay, if a person has manifested a degree of seriousness and concern about eternal things, greater than appeared in his neighbours; if he has *broke off his sins by repentance*, and begun to call upon the name of the Lord, in his family and in private; if he has regularly attended public worship, in the established Church, or elsewhere, and approached the table of the Lord at all opportunities; and especially, if, added to all this, he has separated himself from the ungodly, made it his care to shun the appearance of evil, and to practise universal godliness and righteousness; he has instantly had the laugh, or the scorn, of the neighbourhood upon him. He has been derided, insulted, and persecuted. All manner of evil has been said of him falsely; and, if he has escaped without suffering in his property and person, as well as in his character, he has had more cause to be thankful to God, for the mild Government he lives under, than for the candour or good-will, yea, or the justice of his fellow-subjects. Thus, as of old, (see *Isai. lix. 15*) *He that hath departed from evil hath made himself a prey, and the Lord hath seen it, and it hath displeased him.* And now, how justly may he speak again, as he did formerly, *Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish. For, behold I work a work in your days, a work which ye will not believe, tho' a man declare it unto you.*

III. This brings me to the third and last particular, which is, to call your attention to the *Consequences* we have reason to apprehend, if we still continue to bring forth this poisonous and bitter fruit.

I. On this head I shall say but little. Indeed, it would be very painful to myself, and unpleasing to you, for me to enlarge. Nor is it necessary I should. All that believe the Holy Scriptures, and acknowledge God to be *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, and that are at all acquainted with our complicated and aggravated wickedness, must see that our ruin, as a nation, is inevitable, if we proceed on in this course. No wisdom in counsel,

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or bravery in execution, can possibly save us. The *holy, just, and sin-avenging* GOD, the *supreme Governor* of the world, and *righteous Judge* of the human race: the *rectifier* of *wrongs*, and the *punisher* of *oppressions*, must *visit* for *these things*, and *be avenged* on *such a nation as this*. He is *no respecter of persons*, and cannot, surely, be expected to exercise more lenity towards us than he did towards the tribes of Jacob. Our Crimes have resembled theirs, and so must our punishments. He must *take away our Hedge* of separation, *that we may be eaten up by Atheists, Deists, and other Infidels*; and must break down our Wall of defence, that we may be trodden down of our implacable and malicious enemies. He must *lay us waste*, in Church and State; must remove both our civil and religious liberty, and polity; that we may no longer retain the form of a *Nation*, or a *Church*. He must appoint that we be no more *pruned nor digged*, and that there may *come up briars and thorns*. And he must also *command the Clouds, that they rain no more rain upon us*. All this, as we have seen, in his just judgment, is come upon his favourite people of old; and what are we, that we should have reason to expect milder treatment? Surely, if it had been possible for him to be *partial*, and to *connive* at sin in any people, he would have done it with respect to the posterity of Abraham, his friend; a nation he had so greatly blessed and distinguished, as his peculiar people, for many ages. But far, very far from it! The greater their privileges were, the greater was their guilt in the abuse of them, and the more *signal* and *dreadful* their destruction when it came. What was said of Capernaum, and some of the other cities, was true of them all. The more they were exalted to heaven, in advantages of all kinds; the deeper they sunk down to Hell, in the punishment and misery that beset them. And certainly we, who have so nearly resembled them, both in the blessings bestowed on us, and in our abuse of those blessings, have reason to dread a similar retribution.

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2. That I am not singular in these apprehensions of danger, I shall shew you by two quotations, from names of justly admired and high authority. Bishop Newton, whose three Volumes on the Prophecies, have gained him universal and deserved respect from the wise and good of all denominations, speaks as follows, (Page 239, Vol. II.) “I would not presage ill to my Country; but when we consider the many heinous and presumptuous sins of this Nation; the licentiousness and violation of all order and discipline; the daring insolence of Robbers and Smugglers, in open defiance of all law and justice; the factions and divisions; the venality and corruption; the avarice and profusion, of all ranks and degrees among us; the total want of public spirit, and ardent passion for private ends and interests; the luxury and gaming, and dissoluteness, in high life; and the laziness and drunkenness, and debauchery, in low life; and, above all, that barefaced ridicule of all virtue and decency; and that scandalous *neglect*, and I wish I could not say *contempt* of all public worship and religion: When we consider these things, *the signs of the times*, the stoutest and most sanguine of us all must tremble, at the natural and probable consequences of them. God give us grace, that we may *know at least, in this our day, the things which belong unto our peace, before they are hid from our eyes.* Never may such blindness happen to us as befel the Jews: but may we *seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near; and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon us, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*”

3. Such were Bishop Newton's views of the state of things in this Country, forty or fifty years ago. I fear they are not much mended since that time. It is true, many thousands have been turned to God, by the preaching of his Word: but nevertheless, still the bulk of the nation *lies in wickedness*; and, considering its abuse of Gospel light and of great privileges, is undoubtedly more guilty than
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it was half a Century ago. Add to this, that infidelity, profaneness, dissipation, luxury, lewdness, and every species of wickedness, has, in all probability, advanced to a much greater height since that period. One thing is certain ; that proud, refractory, licentious, and levelling spirit, which will brook no subordination, and can bear no restraint or control, and which has of late surpassed all bounds, and deluged Europe in blood, had hardly then made its appearance. Judge then what the Bishop would have thought had he lived now, and been a spectator of the present scenes. Indeed, his predictions have been partly fulfilled already. The American-War, with the loss of that large part of our Empire, the distressed situation of Ireland, and the various calamities we have suffered since the present convulsions took place in Europe ; are, at least, a *partial* fulfilment of them. Bishop Horne's Writings are of a later date ; and, from the view he had of our increasing profligacy, he was yet more apprehensive of our approaching ruin. " If you behold a Nation," says he, (page 162 of his Sixteen Sermons) " distinguished by irreligion, and contempt of things sacred ; by licentiousness, faction, luxury, dissipation, and effeminacy ; be assured that, without a reformation and return to first principles, the conquest of that nation, by some other, is becoming more and more feasible every day ; the same vices, which provoke divine vengeance, preparing the way for its execution.— Every man, who has the prosperity of his Country at heart, should very seriously consider how far these tokens are to be found upon ourselves ; and what can be done to prevent the farther spreading of the infection ; and to eradicate the seeds of the disorder."

4. It would be well indeed, and certainly one token for good, were we, in general, disposed to do this. But alas ! it is a most unfavourable symptom in our case, that we are insensible of our danger, and unconcerned about putting away the causes of it. Nay, we turn our eyes from the true
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causes of our sufferings, which are our *sins*, and employ them in searching for others, which would leave us innocent, and throw the whole blame of all our Calamities upon our Rulers. In the mean time, our wickedness increases, and continues to bring its own punishment along with it. This must be the case, because *the Judge of all the Earth will do right*. If he will not *hold* an individual *guiltless* that *taketh his name in vain*, will he acquit a whole people, devoted to profane and false swearing, cursing, and blasphemy. *And if God spared not the Angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto Judgment; and spared not the old world, nor the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, who had given themselves over to fornication and went after strange flesh, but condemned them with an overthrow, and set them forth as an example to those that should live ungodly, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire; will he spare those among us who are daily guilty of similar crimes? who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and count it pleasure to riot in the day-time, spots and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls?—those who, when they speak great swelling words of vanity, allure thro' the lusts of the flesh, in much wantonness, those that had escaped from such as live in error: who are murmurers also, and complainers, walking after their own desires, filthy dreamers, defiling the flesh, despising government and dominion, presumptuous, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities, speaking evil of the things they know not; and what they know naturally, as brute-beasts, even in these corrupting themselves: clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the Sea, foaming out their own shame; some of whom also are wandering stars, that is, false teachers, propagators of infidelity and blasphemy, who privily bring in damnable heresies, and deny the Lord that bought them:—Will*

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the Lord, I say, still bear with such, or with a nation where they abound? Surely, he will not. They are bringing upon themselves, as both St. Peter and St. Jude bear witness, *swift destruction*, and for them is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. For, as *Enoch of old prophesied*, and as was in part accomplished in the destruction of the old world, and has often been accomplished since in the desolation and ruin of ungodly nations, especially of the Jews, first by the Chaldeans, and again, a second time, by the Romans, *Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.* And, as St. Peter declares, to this day of national or general Judgment, they are reserved to be punished.

5. Go to now then, ye rich men, luxurious and oppressive, weep and howl for the miseries, which, if your speedy repentance prevent not, shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten, your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire: Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold the hire of your labourers, especially the poor Negroes, that have planted your Sugar and your Cotton, which is of you kept back by fraud and injustice, and the cries of them, torn from their dear relations and connections in life, and dragged into slavery, and smarting and dying, under the cruel lashes of your whips, and the iron rod of your oppressions, have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.—Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton. Ye have nourished your hearts as in the day of slaughter. Ye have killed and condemned the innocent, and he did not, could not, resist you. And now what remains but that you should hear the Lord say, *Vengeance is mine, I will recompence; and that you should find it to be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

It is true he has offered, long offered us mercy, and called us to repentance, from one end of the land to another. *Turn ye, turn ye*, has long been his language, *for why will ye die, oh ! house of Israel, oh ! British Nation ? As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth ; wherfore turn, and live ye.* But alas ! hitherto he has called in vain. As a Nation, we have refused to return, and thus have rejected the counsel of God against ourselves. And this is the most aggravating circumstance of our guilt, and that which, above all others, fits us for destruction, viz. our disobedience to the Gospel-call, and rejection of the Gospel-salvation. Light is come among us, and the glad tidings of salvation have been proclaimed in our ears, but *we have loved darkness, rather than light, because our deeds were evil, and we were unwilling to be reformed.* This, therefore, is the condemnation, and from this quarter, after all, we have most to dread. There are three passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews, very awful indeed, upon this subject ; nay, the whole Epistle seems evidently to have been written, first, with a view to convince the Jews of the truth and excellency of the Gospel ; and secondly, to shew the dreadful consequences of rejecting it, or apostatizing from it. The passages I refer to, are the following. The Apostle (chap. i.) having declared the glorious character and high dignity of the Son of God, infers, (chap. ii. 1) that *we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip : for, says he, if the word spoken by Angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ; which, at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him. God also bearing witness, with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.* Another passage is in the 12th chapter. See, (says he, verse 25) *that ye refuse not him that speaketh : for, if they escaped not who*

who refused him that spake on earth, viz. Moses, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven : whose voice then, viz. at Sinai, shook the earth : but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but heaven also. The Apostle evidently refers to the Father's words, spoken with an audible voice from heaven, both at Christ's baptism and at his transfiguration : This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased : Hear ye him : and also, and especially to the words of Moses (Deut. xviii. 15—19) The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet—unto him ye shall hearken : And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. These words are, by St. Peter, (Acts. iii. 22) interpreted of Christ, and of the destruction which should come, and indeed did come, upon those that rejected him. The other passage I refer to, is very similar to those already quoted, and is to be found Heb. x. 28—31. He that despised the Law of Moses, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses ; presumptuous violators of that Law, whose guilt two or three witnesses attested, being usually punished with death : of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, (adds the Apostle) shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden, under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant a common thing, (so it is in the Original) and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace ? For, we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth to me, I will recompence saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

These awful declarations and threatenings of God's holy word I leave to the serious consideration of those of my Countrymen, who prove by their conduct, that they have not yet obeyed the Gospel. May the Lord incline and enable them to lay them to heart, before it be for ever too late ! And I shall conclude by observing, that, blessed be God, amidst this general profligacy and wickedness, we
have,

have, at least, one token for good. The Lord has yet among us a praying remnant, who have either kept themselves pure, or have escaped from the general corruption. *These recollect the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and his great goodness toward the British Nation, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.* For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was our Saviour. In all our affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved us. But we rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore, he was turned to be our enemy, and fought against us. Then he remembered the days of old, the Martyrs and his people, saying, *Where is he that rescued them from idolatry and superstition, that put his Spirit within them? that led them by his right hand, to make himself a glorious name?* This praying remnant, knowing that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and that his arm is not shortened that it cannot save, or his ear heavy that it cannot hear, rejoice and work righteousness, and remember him in his ways; yea, they stir themselves up, in this time of national danger, to take hold on him, and that both for themselves and for their Country. And, inasmuch as the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers, we are not without hope that the Lord will yet hear and answer, and work out deliverance for us, as he has hitherto done, and spare the land for the righteous sake! May he grant it, for the glory of his great name, that when the Infidels insultingly demand, *Where is now your God?* we may be able to reply, *Lo! this is our God! we have waited for him, and he hath saved us! This is Jehovah, we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his Salvation!* Amen and Amen!

FINIS.

